

Book Review: A Guide to the Fauna of Iran

A Guide to the Fauna of Iran. Eskandar Firouz. Iran University Press; Tehran. 2000. vi + 491 pp

The first attempt to provide a comprehensive vertebrate zoology of Iran was that of William T. Blanford in 1876. Since that time, there have been treatises on various groups of vertebrates (e. g., mammals: Lay, 1967; Harrington, 1977; Ziaie, 1996; birds: Scott, et al., 1975; reptiles: Latifi, 1984 (snakes); Anderson, 1979 (turtles, crocodiles, and amphisbaenians), 1999 (lizards); amphibians: Baloutch and Kami, 1995; fishes: Coad, 1987, 1995. **A Guide to the Fauna of Iran** by Firouz is the first attempt since Blanford to bring all of the vertebrates of Iran together into a natural history guide.

Although the text is in Farsi (Persian), it is accessible to Western readers as a comprehensive list of the vertebrate species of Iran, since there is a Latin and English index, color illustrations with Latin species names, and lists of taxa with both Latin species names and English colloquial names. Most genera are represented by color illustrations, fishes by paintings, amphibians and reptiles by photographs, birds by paintings, and mammals by both. A list of the principal works consulted is provided (pp. 423-432). This list constitutes a good beginning bibliography for anyone interested in the vertebrate zoology and natural history of Iran.

For this book, the author has consulted the zoologists currently working on each of the vertebrate groups to assure that the species lists are up to date. The work covers 164 vertebrate families and 1054 species. Emphasis is given to conservation topics, including threatened and endangered species, problems of exotic introductions, and the ecological consequences of environmental change. The natural history sections include consideration of the zoogeography of Iran.

A renewed interest in zoology has occurred recently in Iran, the many universities including departments of biology and zoology are attempting to build knowledgeable faculties in these disciplines. This emphasis is largely due to the efforts of the author, Eskandar Firouz. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, Firouz was the principal architect of the conservation, natural history legislation and implementation in Iran through the Department of Environment, the establishment of Protected Regions and National Parks, and the regulation of hunting and fishing. These efforts were well on the way to setting a world standard for conservation and the study of natural history at the time of the revolution. Interests in natural

history have survived the period of resistance to perceived "Westernization" in Iran, and young scholars and conservationists must now face the daunting challenge of rebuilding the edifice of conservation initiated by Firouz and his colleagues in the 1960s and early 70s. The present book is yet another major contribution to that effort, and there should be a well-used copy in every local Department of Environment office, university and department library and in the personal libraries of individual zoologists and ecologists in Iran. It will also be a useful reference in specialized libraries, natural history museums, and conservation institutions in the West and in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

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